

I'm not sure what form this manuscript will take, as I'm starting out with just an idea, inspired by something that John Jr. said to me one day. We were talking about something in the past and I talked of an occurrence, and John said, "I didn't know about that". That started me thinking about all the things that happened on the way to here, and perhaps stories and vignettes that Mom and I probably never really spoke of to any of you. I know that Mom had talked about the many things we did in the past, but I think it was probably from her viewpoint. I thought you might like to hear some of the things that I remember about the past, from my viewpoint and experience. We weren't perseverant enough to get much of Mom's thoughts down and recorded, unfortunately. I'm going to try to do that with mine so that you'll have some sort of personal history, based on what I hope will be as thorough a recall as I can muster.

I think maybe my grandchildren might enjoy, as they grow older, looking back to the times that I'll try to describe and recall, and perhaps get to know me a little better. And if all else fails, these will make very nice paperweights

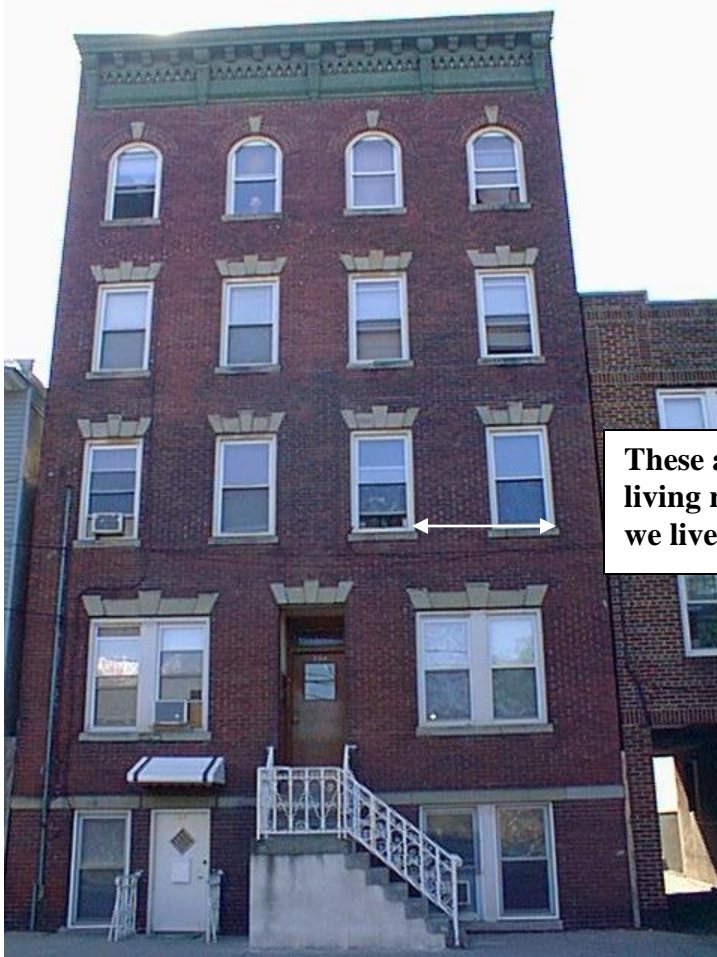
Dad

March 24, 2001

## HOME BEGINNINGS

The earliest recollections I have as a child are from about the time I was in kindergarten. We were living at 284 Van Buren St., in Newark, N.J. The area we lived in was known as the Ironbound Section of Newark, but was mostly called “Down Neck”. It was called the Ironbound section because it was bound on all sides by railroad tracks. I was born on September 8, 1927 at Beth Israel Hospital. The doctor was a woman – Dr. Schectman. She remained our family doctor for many years. I don’t remember much of the birth, although I never did like getting slapped on the rear-end, so that may be a leftover from that day.

The house we lived in was built as an eight family unit. It was owned by Uncle Tony Speziale. He was the husband of mom’s sister, Katie. They remodeled the first floor and converted the two apartments into one for themselves. They had 6 kids, so they needed the space and besides they were the landlords. We lived on the second floor. The staircase went up through the center of the building, so there was an apartment on the left and one on the right on each of the four floors. Our apartment was on the right on the second floor. It was three rooms, all in a single line. They called them “railroad” apartments back then. You entered into the kitchen. Next to that was the bedroom and then the living room. The living room windows looked out onto Van Buren St. and the kitchen windows looked out the back and side into the yard.



**These are the two windows in the living room. This is the apartment we lived in.**

**284 Van Buren Street, Newark N.J.**

The kitchen had a double sink, one side much deeper than the other, that my mother used to wash our clothes (before washing machines). She had a washboard, a corrugated wooden affair that was used to scrub the clothes. The stove was a wood/coal burning stove, on the left side and four gas burners on the right side to cook on. It had an oven on the bottom and attached to the top of the stove were two broilers. Aunt Pat and Uncle Joe had one similar in their house on Miller St. My dad converted it to an oil burner stove. They installed a tank that held about a gallon or two of fuel oil

on the side of the stove, and replaced the wood burning section with two burners that had round metal inserts, kinda like a keyhole saw, but of course much bigger. You turned the oil spigot on, and then lit the burners with a long, metal wand that had a wick at the end, which you lit with a match and then put down between the metal inserts. That was the only heat in the house, we had no central heat, but it did pretty well for the kitchen and the bedroom, however the living room was always a little cold in the winter. I slept on a folding cot, when I was younger at the foot of my parent's bed, and, as I got a little older, in the living room.

We had a bathroom, about the size of an entrance closet in most houses today. Just a toilet bowl, no sink, no tub, no shower. There was a large box that held the water about six or seven feet above the toilet bowl. You flushed by pulling a chain attached to the box. In order to bathe we used to go to the bathhouse, which was about 15 or 20 blocks away from where we lived. They had showers and a swimming pool and were open to the public. In between I would take sponge baths in the deep sink. I was small enough then to sit on the edge of the sink and wash up. I wasn't small enough to get into it!

The kitchen and bedroom floors had linoleum. The kitchen linoleum was "kitchen-y" and the bedroom linoleum usually was in the design of wood flooring. We had an area rug in the living room that pretty much covered the entire floor. My mom's living room furniture was upholstered in a kind of plush, or camel hair. Often when I came home from school I would lie on the couch and read, I liked the feel of the couch and it was very comfortable.

I used to play in the back yard, with my cousin **Junior Speziale**, and **Walyo** (the spelling is just to be able to make the sound of his nickname) I think it really was a variation of the Italian “Guaglione” which was pronounced by the oldsters like “Walyo”. Anyway, there were some other kids there, but I don’t remember too much of them, Junior, Walyo and I were pretty close.

Next door to us on the second floor lived the **Martirano’s**. There was the mother and father (he spoke almost no English) a daughter Anna who was about my age. A younger brother Pat was about 5 years old when Anna and I were 11 or 12. An interesting note is that Pat grew up to be a made man in the Mafia, or whatever it was called. There was a book published about the mob in the neighborhood, and his name was in it as one of the heads of the family that was in the area.

Walyo, Junior and I used to play in the yard or across the street on the corner of Van Buren and Oliver Sts. There was a candy store there and we would go and get some candy and then hang around the corner.

I remember an incident that happened with Junior and me in the yard one day. He had found a five-gallon can, it was a square can, and smelled of gas or oil. We were curious and I got a wooden matchstick and lit it and put it in the can. We ran back a little but nothing happened so Junior went back to the can and just as he looked into it, there was a flash of fire through the opening. Junior was lucky and only his eyebrows and the front of his hair were singed, but I was sure I was going to jail, because I had put the match in. I was very scared for a couple of days until it all passed. I guess we were about 9 or 10 years old at the time.

Diagonally across the street from our house and on the corner was Independence Park. It was about two city blocks wide and about 6 or 7 city blocks long. On the end closest to us was a children's playground with swings and push merry-go-round and sandboxes and other kid's stuff. Then there were about 4 Tennis courts that were available to anyone who wanted to use them. They weren't used as much as you would think; there weren't too many people in that neighborhood that had the time or the inclination to learn to play. One boy, who became one of my best friends in Elementary School, **John Baldasare**, did learn to play and became a very fine player. They entered him in some competitions and I remember he won some prizes. As I grew older we used to visit each other's house and hang out together. In the center of the park was a round bandstand and in the summer there were concerts held there. They would have a concert band one week and a jazz band the next and so on. It was great and I spent a lot of time there listening to the bands.

Another friend was **Tony Amendola**, who lived on Chestnut St, around the corner from us. He played guitar, and was quite good. He had a disability with one (or maybe both, can't remember) of his arms, but still played very well. When I started taking sax lessons (more about this later) we used to sit in his hallway or on the front stoop and play together. We didn't know too many songs, but we had fun trying, and we thought we were pretty damn good!

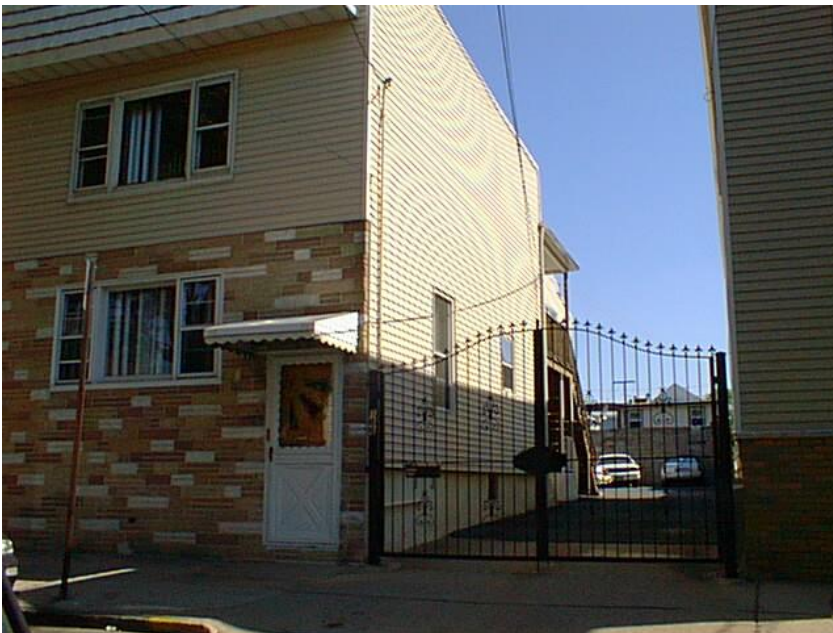
Our house was between Oliver and Chestnut Sts. At the corner of Chestnut and Van Buren was a small grocery store. Nothing like the supermarkets of

today, just a small corner storefront. The Basile's ran it. They were good friends of my Dad, and I used to go there and bag groceries. Not a lot – but they would let me do it and then I think they used to give me a nickel or dime. It's hard to remember too clearly because I think I was about 8 or 9 years old at the time. Al Basile eventually became my sponsor for confirmation when I was about 12. He gave me a wristwatch, which I thought was pretty cool.

The neighborhood was pretty nice, although looking back I guess we would be considered a bit underprivileged by today's standards. My Dad worked for the city of Newark, driving a garbage truck. But as I think back on those days, I had no concept of being needy. It seemed that we always had the things that were necessary. I remember that about once a week my mother would make escarole (we pronounced it "shcodole") and that, along with some good Italian bread was the dinner. But my father always seemed to bring home a goodie, cake or ice cream. And if not, we used to walk to the pharmacy a couple of blocks away, because they had ice cream and Dad would buy me an ice cream cone. I wanted a bicycle for one of my birthdays and because money was tight my Dad found a used one, painted it bright red, put on some new foot pedals and I thought it was the best bike ever. He eventually got a job as chauffeur to the mayor of the city of Newark, Meyer Ellenstein. It was a good job and got my Dad off the garbage trucks. The mayor had a son, Robert, who eventually became an actor and appeared in a lot of films and television. He was never a leading man or a star, but was a character actor and got a lot of work. I understand that he eventually started an acting school.

Getting back to the neighborhood, there were always a lot of relatives around. And the older men used to take us to the beach occasionally – not often but sometimes. I think it was a way for them to get away from their wives! Some summer evenings there would be three or four men from the neighborhood go around to some of the houses with their guitars and serenade in the hallways. They'd play and sing, mostly Italian songs and I remember sitting on the top step of the second floor stairs and looking down and listening, enraptured by the sound.

Speaking of Italian songs reminds me of my grandmother, my father's mother. Her name was Rosaria Anello (her maiden name, by the way, was Rizzuto) and she was a tiny lady, probably less than five feet tall. She and my grandfather (John Anello) lived at 166 Oliver St. We visited her often and she would teach me an Italian song and also teach me to speak Italian. Unfortunately she died when I was about 9 years old, and I don't remember any of the things she taught me. Had she lived longer I might have been able to speak Italian.



*This is the house that my grandparents lived in at 166 Oliver Street. There was no fence then and the garage you can see in the back was a blacksmith shop for my grandfather, who was a blacksmith and my father who worked for him when he was a young man. It's now owned by Aunt Babe (my Dad's*



*sister) and her  
husband Uncle Frank.*

As I think about it now, I realize how much simpler times were then. No T.V., just radio, and we played outside rather than watch TV. I did listen to the radio, however, because there were the radio shows that I liked. I listened to “The Lone Ranger” and “Jack Armstrong, The All American Boy”. I used to send for the decoder rings they would offer, and anything else that I could get. Usually when they came they were made very cheaply, but they did work, and you could decode a message they would give at the end of the show. There were a couple of other shows that I listened to, but can’t remember what they were. I do remember listening to the “Lux Radio Theatre” and of course the Jack Benny show, and Bob Hope and the Lucky Strike Hit Parade. There was also a show called “Inner Sanctum Mysteries”, but I didn’t listen to that because it was too scary.

I have two scars on my body – one under my chin on the left side and an appendectomy scar. The scar on my chin was the result of my trying to get to the radio to change the station. I was listening to one show, and was distracted for some reason. I realized that my second show had started and ran across the kitchen to change the station. In those days my Mom used to wax the linoleum floor, and as I recall I had my shoes off and was in my stocking feet. Anyway, I ran, slipped and hit my chin on the edge of one of the kitchen chairs. It was painful! It also was bleeding pretty badly, but Mom put some sort of bandage and I didn’t have to go to get stitches. Needless to say I missed my show!

We seemed to always be able to get away for a week in the summer for a vacation. Most often we would go to Keansburg, which was about 35 or 40 miles away. In those days it took about an hour or so to get there. It was on the bay, not the ocean, but I think everyone from our neighborhood used to go there. A couple of times we went to Atlantic City, which was about 100 miles or so from where we lived, and that was a real treat! I remember standing in the Steel Pier and listening to the name bands play. I didn't want to leave. My father would have to almost drag me away. I was fascinated with the sound and the look of the bands. I remember listening to a band lead by Mal Hallet. He was a sort of second-string name, but I thought the band was great. There were other bands too, but I don't recall the names.

### SCHOOL BEGINNINGS

The Elementary School I went to was Ann St. School. Naturally it is on Ann St. in Newark. It was about 5 blocks from where we lived, an easy walk. I remember my mother coming to school when I was in kindergarten or first grade and bringing lunch. We used to eat together in the multipurpose room, which was like a small auditorium. I recall having oranges, that mom used to peel. I can't remember actually eating food, although I know there were sandwiches. I think my mom came every lunchtime; at least that's my recollection of those days. I'm trying to think about some of the things that happened during my school years or the elementary school years and I recall when I started playing the saxophone, I guess when I was about nine years old. I found the saxophone under the bed or in the closet and put it together,

making God awful honking sounds. My dad had bought the sax for his brother, Uncle Sam, but he didn't have any interest and Dad took the sax back.

The music teacher at Ann Street school was Mrs. Lieberman and she recommended a saxophone teacher to my dad and his name was Sol Rabinowitz. I started taking lessons from him. He lived up in the Weequahic section of Newark. At first my father would have to drive me there and wait for me to get my lesson. As I got a little bit older I started taking the bus. Sol was a very good teacher and had me playing very quickly. He said he felt if I continued to work hard and practice hard I probably could get a job with a name band when I got older. Of course practice was a chore, so I didn't apply myself as well as I should have, but I was growing musically quite fast, and started playing at school and with friends for fun.

I liked school and I was in the science club, at that point in time I thought I might want to be a scientist. I also got a chemistry set and had lots of fun with that for a while. During those days we had what was known as the school patrol. If you were selected for the patrol you received a silver badge, about the size of the top of a large Hunt's tomato can. The school's name was on it and the imprint of a police badge. It was shaped semi-round so that it fit on the bicep of your arm. It had a strap attached to each side and you put it on your arm with the straps. We were the "security" guards of the school. It was a privilege to be on the patrol and I was very proud when I made it. You had to have pretty decent grades, and of course not have been in any trouble.

I used to have to take gym (we didn't call it P.E. back then), which I wasn't too fond of. We had to learn to use clubs (shaped like bowling pins) and do calisthenics with them. We had to climb ropes and work on the parallel bars and horses and run sprints. I was average, although the gym teacher used to be surprised that I could run as fast as I did.

We also were able to take printing. That was an interesting experience. We learned to set type the old fashioned way (that is, old fashioned compared to today). You would hold a typesetter. Think of the measuring machine that you use to size your foot. Something like that only much smaller. You would hold it in your left hand and then choose type from a large tray separated into little cubicles, each cubicle would hold one letter of the alphabet. The lower case letters were all arranged together and we had to learn where they were and pulled them out a letter at a time and place them into the holder. The capital letters were arranged separately so we had to learn where they were as well. In setting the type we would have to pull each letter to spell out whatever it was we were trying to type. The type was set upside down and backwards, so we had to learn how to do that too. When it was all assembled we would place the holder into the printing press and it would print out whatever it was we assembled. A whole lot different than using a computer nowadays!

I played in my first band in elementary school. Mr. DiNardo, the high school band director used to come to Ann St. school one day a week and we had a little band. It was very exciting and the first song I ever played with

the band was “Vilia”. At the time I thought that was the best song ever written!

All in all elementary school was a nice experience and the culmination was the graduation play. The graduating eighth grade class would do a graduation play as the final project and everyone wanted to be in the play. The play that was chosen for our graduation was “The Courtship of Miles Standish”. I got the role as Miles Standish who was in love with Priscilla but was afraid to approach her, so he got John Alden to approach her for him. Unfortunately Priscilla was in love with John Alden and he eventually got her instead of Miles. Anyway it was a fun play and I had a major role. I still remember the opening line of the play. When the curtain opened I was standing in front of a wall that had breastplates and rifles and swords and my line was “Look at these arms so burnished and bright as if in an arsenal hanging.” That’s about the only line of the play I recall!

The play was based on a poem by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and the language was very old English. That was the finale of my elementary school life.

My brother Ben was born when I was nine years old. So we were a little crowded on Van Buren St. Of course at first it wasn’t too bad because he was in a crib in the bedroom. As he got older the crunch was getting tighter and Dad started looking for a bigger place. We lived on Van Buren Street until I was in about the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, and then moved over to Jefferson Street. We moved into the Bergamotto house. My mother was a godmother to one of the Bergamotto kids, so it was like family there also.

The Bergamotto's were bakers, and the first floor was the bakery and store. They lived on the second floor and we lived on the third. This apartment had four rooms instead of 3 and it was a box configuration. You entered into the kitchen and if you went straight ahead you went into the living room. If you turned right you would be in my Mom and Dad's bedroom. Turn right again and you'd be in my bedroom, well actually mine and Ben's bedroom, and then right again back into the kitchen. There was also a very large pantry as soon as you walked into the kitchen from the hallway on the right. This has some significance for a story that I'll tell you later.

Because the Bergamotto's were Bakers they slept during the day and worked all night long so that bread would be ready in the morning for sale in the store. That created a problem for me because it was difficult to practice the saxophone during the day while they were sleeping. The solution was to go into the bathroom, which would be the furthest distance from the area that they slept in downstairs. I used to sit on the edge of the tub with my feet in the tub, pulled the shower curtain around me and practice. I think that sometimes I used to put a towel into the bell of the horn to help soften the sounds. Not a great way to practice but it was the best we could do at the time.

This apartment was much nicer than the Van Buren Street apartment and of course larger. My mom used to work so I was relegated to doing the cleaning on Saturday morning. I used to dust all the furniture and polish it. I would make the beds and vacuum the rugs. Finally I would wash and wax the kitchen floor. I also used to baby-sit my brother and then my sister

Rosalie who came along while we lived there. I was 13 when Rosalie was born and I used to push her in the stroller as she got little older.



**We lived on the third floor. The window on the right was the hallway. The small window was the bathroom. The two windows together was the kitchen and the window on the left was the living room. The bedrooms were in the back.**

**The Bergamotto's House. 217 Jefferson St. Newark, N.J. The bakery used to be on the street level. Now a unisex beauty shop!**

As I said, my chores on Saturday were to clean the house and wash and wax the kitchen floor. This story relates to that and I don't know if I've ever told this to any of you. One Saturday morning I was doing chores as usual, but that evening was a Boy Scout dance that I was attending. I was in Scouts for about three years and this was a big event. I was looking forward to going that night, so I was doing the chores as quickly as I could. There was a pantry in the kitchen where Mom kept the mops and brooms and cleaning

stuff. Also canned foods and cereals and other foodstuffs. Back then the neighborhood men used to be able to buy alcohol (illegally – bootleg stuff) with which they made homemade liqueurs. These would usually include Anisette, Crème de Cocoa, Coffee Sport and Crème de Menthe. Our fathers would buy the alcohol, share among each other and make the liqueurs. Dad kept these bottles in the pantry. Well, as I was cleaning and going in and out of the pantry, for some reason, and I don't know why, I took a sip of the Coffee Sport, and it tasted good! I went back to my chores, but each time I went into the pantry I took another, longer sip. I didn't realize it at the time, but I was getting drunk! I finally passed out and don't recall anything until I woke up in the hospital! I found out what had happened a couple of days later. Apparently I passed out on the kitchen floor. Mom use to have a laundry man come and pick up and deliver the laundry on Saturdays, and he came to the door, found it ajar and saw me on the floor. He ran downstairs to Mrs. Bergamotto to tell her and they called the ambulance. She almost got into a fight with the ambulance people because they told her that I was drunk and she told them they were crazy! This is all second-hand info, because it was told to me.

I awoke in City Hospital, strapped down to the bed, in the alcoholic ward! They told my Mom that I was too noisy in the children's ward so they transferred me down there. **AND THEY LEFT ME THERE UNTIL MY MOTHER AND FATHER CAME TO PICK ME UP!** I woke up with a headache to end all headaches. To put it mildly I was sick to my stomach and I must have thrown up everything that was in my stomach and then some!



The first thing I noticed were the bars on the windows and that I was tied down. The nurses wouldn't untie me until the doctor came and questioned me. They wanted to know if I was trying to kill myself! Talk about being scared! When they finally realized that I had just drunk too much, they let me up. And I was surrounded by all the drunks that they picked up during the nite in the city! I had to eat at the table with them, and they all were as sick as I was. There was one guy who kept telling me "Kid, you gotta reform – this stuff'll kill you!" I guess the doctors and nurses felt it would be a good object lesson for me to stay there until my folks came to get me. All told I was in the hospital overnite and most of the next day. Needless to say I was a complete teetotaler for years after that!

We stayed at the Bergamotto's until I was about sixteen, and then moved to Miller St. My grandfather, my mother's father, owned two houses there. His name was John Gentempo, which was my mother's maiden name. I guess we moved there to save money because I know the rent was very inexpensive. The neighborhood wasn't the greatest and the apartment was a little smaller than the Jefferson St place. It was also not as nice. The area was nicknamed "Nanny Goat Alley" because a lot of families there used to keep goats. My grandfather had some and I remember as a kid always having goat's milk to drink when we used to visit. When we moved there he had already gotten rid of the goats. He lived in the corner house with Aunt Bessie, my mom's sister and Uncle Joe and Aunt Pat, my mom's brother and his wife. Cousins John and Eddie were born and raised there, so we all hung out together. Both John and Eddie moved to Houston Texas later in life and still live there.

My Grandfather had a wine cellar, and he and some of the neighbors used to make their own wine. They would get a truckload of grapes and rent a grape crusher. It was a wagon and on it was an engine, very old fashioned with the chimney-like apparatus on top where you would put the gasoline to run the engine. They would crush the grapes and then put the wine into large wooden barrels to age. The wine cellar was part of the garages that separated the two houses, and had a dirt floor. There were about 4 or 5 large 50 gallon wooden barrels that they filled with wine. There was always wine on the table at dinnertime, but I never acquired a taste for it until much later in life.

Not too far away from there, about half a mile was where my cousin “Cappy” lived. His name is Anthony Caproni, and his father Bill was married to another of my mom’s sisters, Aunt Vic. We all went to East Side High School, which was three or four miles away. It was a pretty long walk, and we couldn’t wait to get our licenses to drive so we could get to school more easily.

My cousins were all involved in sports at the high school, mostly football. A couple of blocks from where I lived were the Marzano twins and they were also involved in football with Cappy. They were excellent players and were very popular at school, along with Tony Parillo and “Red” Sauchelli and Rocco Nobile (who gave up the trumpet in favor of football, thank goodness!) There were others too, but most of them were a year older than I and were involved in their group of friends.



*The tall building is a cold storage warehouse. Just behind it is the railroad where the foods being stored were unloaded.*

**This is the empty lot where the two houses stood. My grandfather's house was at the corner (the star) and our apartment was next to it. (The white arrow) In between were some garages and the wine cellar.**

I wasn't that interested in participating in sports, because I was playing in the band and also a band that we had organized with some of the better players at school. Mr. DiNardo was a string player, but we weren't able to keep an orchestra going. The Dance Band (we didn't call them Stage Bands or Jazz Bands back then) wasn't too bad. We had a good lead trumpet player. I played lead alto, and James Moody, who has become an icon in the jazz field played tenor sax. He took most of the solos, but I got to play some also. James lived in what were called the "projects", low cost housing built

by the government. They were located on South St. very near where we lived. Many times we walked home together and I'd stop at his house and we'd practice together. I remember one time he got so frustrated with the school horn, which wasn't very good, that he threw it against the wall in the apartment, and they were made of cement blocks! The horn didn't fare too well!

Some of the guys in the band got together and we started a band of our own outside of school. We were some of the better players and of course we had visions of becoming rich and famous!

We had three Saxes, three trumpets, bass, piano and drums. We were searching for a name and I mentioned that my father once had a band called "The Paradise Serenaders". Everybody liked that so we asked my father and he said of course we could use the name. He even had a felt sign with the name on it and gave it to us. Johnny has that sign today. So we became "The Paradise Serenaders" and we started rehearsing and the band was becoming pretty good. The guy who sort of took over as leader was Bob Walters, the piano player, and he got us a job playing for the Friday night dances at St. Benedict's church. We were making five dollars each, and thought we were pretty good!! I wish there were the recording equipment back then, like we have now, it would have been great to REALLY hear how we sounded!

We started getting other gigs, and were pretty well known in the area. One job Bob booked for us was for New Year's Eve – I don't remember which year – and it was at a restaurant in Keansburg. It was fine going there in the summer; it was a summer resort of sorts, but in the winter – ugh!! I think we

each were going to make \$25.00, which was a lot of money for us back then. But we had no place to stay, and it would be too late to drive back after playing. Bob Walters folks had a summer house in Rumson NJ, near Keansburg, so we planned on staying there overnite. The only problem was that there was NO HEAT! When we got there we also found that there were no sheets and blankets for the beds, so we wound up sleeping on a mattress, and using another mattress to cover us. Luckily there were enough beds so that we were able to get some sleep. A couple of guys wanted to stay in the car with the heater on, but that was discouraged because the gas tanks were low and everything was closed until morning. The entire night was very uncomfortable and cold. That was the first New Year's Eve I worked and got paid.

The second New Year's Eve that I played was a year later, and that was in Bloomfield N.J. I was hired to play lead alto and a kid named Sandy Katz was hired to play lead trumpet. We were the ONLY TWO white guys on the band. The rest were black musicians and we played the lead books because we were the best readers. I was 15 at the time, and the name of the band was Tiny Robertson. I also remember that it was the first time I ever smelled pot and saw someone smoking. Most of the band did it in the bathroom on breaks. They offered some to Sandy and I, but we refused, mostly because we were scared to try. I never did mess with that stuff afterward.

I should back up a bit, because before we formed this band there was a guy who lived around the corner when we lived at Bergamotto's. His name was Pat Alfano and he was a very, very bad drummer! He formed the band as a leader and we rehearsed in his house. There were about six pieces in the

band, and it really wasn't very good. We added some guys and Pat changed his name to Pat Alden. The first job he got us (without pay) was for an old Italian man in the neighborhood who was having a birthday. We set up in his living room, and he and five or six of his old cronies were in the kitchen, drinking wine and eating cheese and pepperoni and Italian sausage and good Italian bread. They paid no attention to us and couldn't care less about what we were playing, which was probably just as well, because we really were terrible. We played all the songs we knew at the time (about 5 OR 6) and then packed up and left. I don't think any of the men even acknowledged the fact that we were there!

We kept rehearsing, and not getting very much better. Pat had an idea to run a dance in the basement of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel church. We talked him into trying to get a drummer who lived in the neighborhood to play for us. We told Pat this would give him a chance to be in front of the band as the leader, and fortunately he liked that idea. The drummer's name was Joe Spino and he was very good. We had posters made with his picture and name featured and he made one rehearsal. I think that was enough for him. The night of the dance he never showed! Luckily my father was there and still had his old drum set, so he went home and got them and he actually played with us.

We had planned to open the dance with our theme song, which was "Stardust", and Rocco Nobile was playing the trumpet. (He wasn't very good either!) We rigged a curtain on the stage because there was none. We had a string tied to each side of a curtain we made out of material and hung on a wire across the stage. We had someone on each side to pull the string

and open the curtain on cue. The cue was when Rocco played the first three notes of Stardust, and then “pull”. Well, Rocco played the first three notes, they pulled and the whole curtain fell down! Kinda like “Our Gang” Comedy! That was the start and it only got worse. I think we had all of 8 or 10 people show up! Luckily the church donated the hall, so we didn’t have to pay for that. That also was the end of the Pat Alden band!

I was fairly lucky because I was getting better as a musician, and I knew a lot of songs. I had a good ear, something I guess I was born with, and I could pick out songs with comparative ease. I was about 14 when some older guys asked me to play with them. They were playing in the back room of a bar in Kearny (NJ) and wanted me to play. I went but they had to let me in the back door because I was too young to go through the bar! It was a great experience for me being so young, and they also paid me! I think it was about 3 or 4 dollars. I know it wasn’t much, but it was the first time I was paid as a musician, so I guess you could say that was my start in the profession. It was also a great learning experience, because the guys would tell me when I was doing something wrong, or playing something incorrectly, but they were kind and I learned quickly. During this time I started taking lessons in New York on 48<sup>th</sup> St. I don’t remember the name of the teacher, and I didn’t stay with him too long, because I didn’t feel he was helping me as much as I wanted. I enjoyed the travel to New York tho, because I would take the Hudson Tube train, and walk from the station to my lesson. Then on the way back I would stop at the Horn & Hardart. These were restaurants in New York City, and had coined the word “Automats”, as they were called. They had small cubicles that were about the size of post-office boxes, with clear windows on them. Behind each

window was a food selection – a sandwich or pie or cake and you would put in whatever coins were called for. Then the door would open and you would take your food out. The drinks were dispensed from a fountain-type affair. Again you would put in your coins then put a glass or cup under the spigot that was shaped like a lions head, with the liquid coming out of the mouth. You would pull a handle and just enough liquid would come out to fill the cup or glass. They were known as having the best coffee in town. It was a very popular restaurant in those days and I always looked forward to stopping in there before traveling back home. The original automat is on

display at the Smithsonian Institute



## DAYS

High School  
front of the school is  
front building is now. It  
big lawn  
and steps leading up to the double door entry.

High school was a great time for me. The most important thing that happened was that I met Chris DiLeo! We were in our sophomore year when we met. I had started as a freshman at East Side High, but because she lived on Jackson St. she went to the East Side Annex the first year. So we didn't meet until we were sophomores. She and I always argued about who made



the first approach. She claimed I did, but I remember distinctly that she was sitting in front of me in one class. She turned around and offered me a piece of candy, and from that time on I was crazy about her! She always claimed that I made the first approach, but I was too shy, and she was very outgoing. She was the cutest girl I had ever seen, and the most vivacious. She had an incredible personality, and a lot of the guys would hang around her, she had that special attraction!

We started out as a group of friends; we were the active ones at school, in the Red Cross Club and everything that we could be involved in. We all hung around together and had a great group of girls and guys. As we got to be seniors we were on the “Torch” committee. The Torch was the name of our yearbook. We spent so much time in the room set aside for this that our studies suffered, and at one point we were threatened with being removed from the committee if we didn’t get it together.

I think I knew from that time on that I was going to marry Chris. I was completely in love with her, and at first I don’t think she was as involved as I. There was a guy who was a year older than us, Al Restivo, who was crazy about her too. He dated her a couple of times, but I guess it didn’t stick. I was a jealous fool! I didn’t want her going with anyone but me, but it was difficult because she was so popular and so cute!!

We used to go to an ice cream store called Buthman’s on Springfield Ave in Newark. They made the greatest ice cream sundaes, and we would drive all the way up there to get them. We also would go to a relative’s house of

Benny Tortorello, another classmate, and Chris would make dinner (pasta) and we would have six or eight people there. It was a fun time.

I was just 14 years old when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and got us into the war. We had war bond sales at school and all kinds of patriotic events to help the war effort. As the war progressed and we were getting older we, that is most of the guys in our class, wanted to get into it and enlist, but we had to be 18, or 17 with parents permission. Mom and I used to be on all kinds of committees about the war, the Red Cross, and anything else we could get involved with. And often it got us into trouble! We would get passes from the teacher who was in charge of the Red Cross and then we would meet in the cafeteria. Mom had the lady in charge of the cafeteria completely concerned about her. Mom would say she didn't have time to have breakfast and didn't feel well, and the lady would give her something to eat to hold her over until lunchtime. As I said we would meet in the cafeteria, and one day while we were there having a great old time the woman who was in charge of truancy, back then they called her a truant officer, she would probably be one of the assistant principals by today's standards, came into the cafeteria and "busted" us. We had to report to her office, and Mom got out of it by telling her about not feeling well and needing something. The truant officer's name was Miss Kraemer, and she was like an army drill sergeant! Well she let mom go, but really raked me over the coals! She called me a draft dodger- and I was only 16! I had a little bit of a mustache; more like fuzz, but it made me look older. Anyway Mom got away with it and I got detention!

There is another story related to Miss Kraemer. As I said before, by the time I was a junior, we had moved from Jefferson St. to Miller St. . Anyway, when we started the Paradise Serenaders, we needed music stands. Each week name bands used to be booked into the Adams Theatre, just off Broad Street in Newark. We would go to see the bands, Harry James, Les Brown, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey, Stan Kenton and just about every name band that was playing in those days. Most of the bands had these great looking stands, the bottom was like a V and the top had a scroll to it. We wanted stands like that, but they were too expensive for us to buy. So we decided to make them for ourselves. We bought plywood and made the bottoms, and then we bought sheet metal to make the scroll tops. Some of us spent most of the day in the school shop working on the stands. In fact I was at school for a week, but didn't go to my classes, just stayed in the shop and worked on the stands. I don't remember how we got around the shop teacher, but we did. Unfortunately the next week I got sick and was out of school for most of the week. By the end of that week the school was curious about where I was, and Miss Kraemer came to the house on Miller St! She walked right in and told my mother that I was out of school for two weeks. Mom said she was wrong, that it was only a week. Miss Kraemer marched into the bedroom and made me 'fess up. Very uncomfortable!! I wasn't too popular around the house after that for a long while! And the stands were OK, but very, very heavy, so we suffered for that also.

Because we started making money at the Friday nite dances and then some Saturdays or Sundays, I didn't stay in the school band after my junior year. James Moody had left to go into the Army and the band began to deteriorate. Mr. DiNardo tried to get us to stay, but we were out making money and

unfortunately didn't stay with him at school. He was a good man and a good teacher, but the area was tough to keep a program going.

High School was fun, and because the war was on we were involved in a lot of events that related to the war effort. We did War Bond rallies and Red Cross fund drives and anything else we could get involved in. When VE (Victory in Europe) day was declared the school went wild! We were out in the street yelling and screaming and it was a very exciting time. Most of the guys our age wanted to get into the service, and many of us joined right after graduation. I joined the Navy in July after our June graduation. My mother and father had to sign for me, because I wasn't 18 yet. I left for the Navy on July 21, 1945.

## **NAVY DAYS**

I was sent to the Naval Training Base in Bainbridge, Maryland for boot camp training. It was a new experience for me, and a sobering one. Getting up very early and doing all the stuff that was required took some getting used to. I got lucky, because they were looking for some drummers to play for the companies as they marched around the parade field. I told them my father was a drummer and that I could play (it was a small prevarication, because I actually could play a little, and as it turned out as well as most of the other drummers that were chosen) that got us out of having to march. We sat in a bleacher type stand and played cadences as the companies practiced marching. Turned out to be a good deal for us. The regimen was tough, but it did some good, I went from about 160 pounds down to 148! Much better weight to fit into the sailor outfit. Mom came to visit after the first 4 weeks

of training, and the first thing she did was scream with laughter when she saw my head. They almost made us bald with the haircuts they gave, and she thought it was hilarious. There is a picture of me somewhere in my sailor outfit and she wrote “skinhead” across the top of it. She was the hit of the company I was in, as usual. When she wrote to me she would decorate the envelopes with pin-up girls, and she drew them very well. It got so that I had to wait to read the mail, because the guys in my barracks would pass the envelope around to see the latest creation by her!

We were supposed to do 12 weeks of boot camp, but were pulled out after about 9 weeks. It was the time when many service men were being discharged, and those of us who had some business background (my major in high school) and could type were sent to Washington D.C. to work at the Navy Department. We were assigned to offices and worked on the papers that sailors filed to receive dependent travel compensation. It was relatively simple work, but it was at the Navy Department and our offices were right next to the Reflection Pool, so it was pretty good duty. When we got to Washington there were no barracks available for us, so they put us on what was called subsistence and quarters. It meant that we were able to live in civilian housing and we were given extra money for food and lodging. It was a surprise, but a nice one. I moved into an apartment for a short while, sharing with two other sailors, but we found a house that was owned by a really neat guy and his wife. He used to be a professional jockey and they were both tiny, but very active and real fun people. They had a big house and were able to accommodate seven sailors. It was an eight or nine bedroom house, and it was great. When we had to stay in Washington over the weekend they would have a great big Sunday breakfast, and made it very

homey. Most weekends we would get a pass and I would go home to New Jersey and stay with my parents. My mother spoiled me, would insist that I bring my laundry home and she would do all that before I had to go back to Washington. She also use to bake “knots” cookies and every guy who rode back with me knew and by the time I got back to Washington most of the cookies were gone! They loved them, and Mom used to make extra, knowing that I was sharing with other sailors

We stayed on subsistence and quarters for about 7 months and then were assigned to quarters that had been evacuated by WAVES. (That’s what they called the female sailors) Many service people were being discharged and so the barracks became available. Because they were formerly WAVE’s quarters they were relatively clean and comfortable. I was stationed there until I was discharged.

I had tried to get assigned to the Navy School Of Music, but in order to be considered I would have to enlist for three years. I wasn’t about to do that, so I didn’t get the chance to attend the school, unfortunately. But when I got assigned to the base, I met some other musicians and we formed a quintet. It wasn’t too bad and we got some gigs playing at the Officer’s club and the non-commissioned Officers club. We got paid \$5.00 each for each job, which wasn’t too bad in 1946! We played 8 or 10 jobs and then the guys started getting discharged so the band broke up. I was finally discharged from the Navy on July 18, 1946. The date is significant for what came a few years later. I enlisted after high school graduation, and was sworn into the Navy on July 21, 1945. I wasn’t quite 18 years old yet, so my mother and father had to sign for me. Because of the discharge date, I actually served 11 months and 28 days, not quite a full year. In 1950, when the Korean War

broke out and the draft started up again, I was drafted because I needed to have one year of service to be exempt, and I missed it by 3 days! I'll talk more about that later.

After my discharge from the Navy I was back home with my folks, and my time in service made me realize that I should try to get a college education. I saw how important that was when I was in service and was determined to get a college degree. What actually made it possible was that the government passed what was called the G.I. bill, which paid for college, based on your term of service. Because of my time in service, I was eligible for 3 and a half years of schooling. I probably couldn't have gone to college if I had to pay the tuition, because I didn't have the money nor did my parents. I chose Montclair State College, because it was within traveling distance from our house, and I decided I wanted to be a teacher. I also wanted to be close to home because Mom and I were going steady by then. To be perfectly honest, I really wanted to play music and be a full time musician, but I knew that I probably wouldn't be able to make a living just playing music, so I decided to go to Montclair. When I checked into the admission requirements, I found that I needed to have a foreign language credit. I had started taking French in high school, but lasted about 2 weeks and dropped the course. I didn't like the teacher and the language was very difficult. Anyway, I needed to get the language credit and found that Seton Hall University in South Orange was offering an accelerated course in Spanish that would qualify for the language credit at Montclair. So I took that program, which meant driving up to South Orange from Newark a couple of nights a week. But it was a 12-week course so it was ultimately worth the inconvenience.

I started at Montclair in January of 1947. I wanted to get my degree with the people in the music department that had started in Sept of 1946, so I decided to go through the three summer school sessions, and I made it through the program and got my degree in June of 1950 with the rest of the class.

During this time Mom and I got engaged. Because I had 3 and a half years of credit on the G.I. bill, I worked in the library during my last semester to pay for my tuition and books. It was easy work, and I actually enjoyed my time there.

Mom and I had decided to get married in April of 1950. I was still in school, my last semester, and I was preparing for my graduation recital. I had to play a Von Weber concerto and a Schumann piece plus some other smaller art songs on clarinet and also play 1<sup>st</sup> Clarinet with a clarinet trio for my recital. It was the most difficult thing I did during my college days, and the most demanding. Talk about stress! It was given in a recital hall at the college, and there were about 100 people who attended, including my mother and father, and Mom's mother and father. We had invited the head of the music department, Dr. Edna MacEachern to attend the wedding. When she found out that we had planned the wedding BEFORE my recital she was very upset. She felt that I should play my recital before the wedding, since I would have less opportunity to prepare for it after the wedding. That meant having two months less time to prepare, adding to the stress. Fortunately, I was able to get it done. Dr. MacEachern loved Mom – she always said it was she who helped me get through college. She charged Mom with seeing that I got ready for the recital, so Mom would come to the college with me two or three nights a week to encourage me during the rehearsals with the



piano accompanist, and my trying to memorize all that material. (We had to do the concerto and other pieces from memory – only the trio was read) We got it done, and I finally got my B.A. degree.

After getting out of the Navy and starting at Montclair College, I had started a big band (11 pieces) and we rapidly became well known in Newark and the surrounding area.



*This is a picture of the band. We were playing at the Continental Ballroom in Newark, N.J. for a New Year's Eve party.*

My father and a friend, Frank Iosso, acted as my managers. It was nice, because they would go out and get the work for the band and do the contracts. I only had to concern myself with the music. We used to rehearse once a week, and the band became very popular. We did lots of fun things, and virtually had a dance/show band.

This picture shows Pete Castellano (who was my best man at our wedding) and Tom Manfre, doing a take-off on the Hawaiian War Chant. They did some crazy things, but the audiences loved it.



*Hawaiian War Chant. Tom used balloons filled with water for his "chest"*



*Pete and Tom again, this time a take-off on a song called "The Barber of Salerno" It was a comedy number and they made it even more comical with their antics!*

There were several large ballrooms in Newark during that time; the most popular were the Wideway Ballroom, the Continental Ballroom and Frank Daily's Terrace Room. Frank Daily also owned the Meadowbrook ballroom, which featured many of the name bands of that time. We became

popular enough that we were doing dates every weekend, and at one time I remember we had 18 or 20 dates within a month.

There were a number of clubs in Newark at this time; they were called Social Clubs or Athletic clubs or some such thing. The guys in my neighborhood started a club and we called ourselves the Blue Anchor A.C. The most athletic thing we did was shoot pool. We formed a group and each paid monthly dues. With the dues we rented a basement on Goble St. in Newark, about a half-mile from where I lived. It was fun and we would run “Socials”, invite our girlfriends and have a party. We were really good guys and pretty much behaved ourselves when the girls were there. Mom came to a couple of socials, but she didn’t like them, so I couldn’t get her to go to any more after the first couple of times. And of course I didn’t go either. But our club, like many of the other clubs in Newark would run a yearly dance at one of the ballrooms. It was a good way to get extra money into our treasury. I started getting booked by a number of the clubs in Newark and became quite popular. There were two other bands competing with me at the time, the Larry Tobia band and the Don Sterling band. They were good bands, but we did more than just play music, we did small little skits and it was more of a show/dance band. This got us more work than the other bands but it was still very competitive. We tried all kinds of fun things to entertain the audiences. The following picture is of the band doing some nutty stuff to a song called, “Enjoy Yourself, It’s Later Than You Think”



The various clubs that booked us would print up large posters with my picture on them, and put them up on telephone poles all over the city. Dr. MacEachern made a point of telling me, in front of one of my classes that she saw my face on every pole when she had to travel to Newark!

We also booked one summer at the Wigwam in Budd Lake New Jersey.



*This picture was taken at the Wigwam in Budd Lake. We were doing a song called "Trees" and we made trees out of rolled up newspapers and ended the song as you see in the picture. My father, your grandfather, and Great-grandfather is the man at the very top left side of the picture.*

During that summer an agent named Lloyd LaBrie of the McConkey Agency from New York had been passing through New Jersey and stopped in to see the band. He liked what he saw and gave me his card and asked me to

contact him in New York. I did and he was interested in trying to book the band into ballrooms beyond New Jersey. Unfortunately, the big band era was ending and ballrooms were closing, so that never really came to be. He did submit me as the leader for a band in California, the Sam Donohue band, which was a well-known big time band at the time. Sam was going back into service because of the Korean War, and they had engagements that the band needed to honor. It came down to someone from California and me, and California won. So I didn't get that opportunity. We had also been booked at a very famous restaurant called the Rustic Cabin. It was the place where Frank Sinatra got his start. We had hoped that we could play there regularly, visions of the big time in our heads, but the decline of the big bands made it difficult for the management to continue to book big bands.

I mentioned about the Korean War breaking out about 1951, and I was considered a veteran and got my education through the G.I. Bill. But the parameters for deferral for the Korean War were that you had to have at least ONE YEAR of service in World War II or be married with children. I had 11 months and 28 days, 3 days shy of a year, and I was married with no children yet, so they drafted me! And this time I went into the Army. I was slated to attend Officer's Candidate School, where they were pushing out 2<sup>nd</sup> lieutenants rapidly to go to Korea. Unfortunately many of those that went were killed. While I was in basic training, a friend who had gone to college with me and was the company clerk for the Fort Dix Band found out that I was there. He came to see me and thought I was crazy to consider going to OCS. He said he could arrange for me to be transferred to the Fort Dix Band. So I had him do it, and it was a very wise decision. I was in the Army for about 7 months, when Mom came down with the flu. The doctor

that was treating her gave her enormous amounts of anti-biotic, and apparently it destroyed some of her intestinal lining. That, coupled with the fact that they soon found out that she also had Non-tropical Sprue, an illness of the digestive tract, caused her to become very sick. In fact, for a time there was some question as to whether she would survive. She had lost weight from the diarrhea until she weighed only 78 pounds! The Army sent me home on a 30-day leave to care for her, and in the meantime I put in for a hardship discharge and received it. So much for the Army!!

I started up the big band again and we were doing well. We started playing summers in New Jersey at a hotel called the Pine Hill Lodge. It was located in Mt. Freedom, New Jersey and was a summer resort for young adults. They booked the big band and we backed shows every weekend, and played for dancing. Then we broke down into a quintet and played in the bar. We were booked into the Lodge every summer for 8 years from 1953 to 1960.

There is an interesting story connected to the Pine Hill Lodge. The owners were the Gilmans, mother and father, along with some other partners. The Gilmans had a son, Richie, who was about my age, and he really liked the band. We became friendly during the 8 years I played there. Well, while I was working at Disneyland I received a call one day; I think it was about 1978 or 1979. My secretary said it was a Mr. Richard Gilman from Atlantic City. It took a minute or so to lock in, but when I started to talk to him he reminded me of Pine Hill Lodge. He was a Vice President of the Bally Company and was responsible for the building of Bally's Hotel in Atlantic City. He wanted me to come there a see it, and suggested that the next time I was in Florida I should call him and he would arrange for me to visit to see

the hotel. Shortly after, during one of my Florida trips I called him. He arranged for my ticket from Orlando to Newark and back. When I arrived at Newark Airport two young pilots met me and they took me to Atlantic City in a small two-engine plane. When I got to Atlantic City there was a big silver stretch limo waiting for me! I was taken to a very old motel that they were using as headquarters until the Bally's was built. The only other casino/hotel that was built at that time was Caesar's. Anyway to make a long story short, they wine and dined me, and finally offered me the job as Director of Entertainment for the hotel if I wanted it. Of course that would mean moving back to New Jersey from California, plus the salary they offered wasn't all that much more than I was making at Disneyland. And of course Mom wasn't in the least bit interested in moving back. So I thanked them and turned it down. As it turned out it was the right decision.

The summer following our last one at Pine Hill Lodge we were booked into the West End Casino in Long Branch N.J. This was a summer resort that featured name and semi-name performers. We were the back-up band for these performers. The most notable were Johnny Mathis, who had just recorded his first two big hits, "It's Not For Me To Say" and "Chances Are" We also played for Eartha Kitt, Allan Dale and Lou Monte. There were others, but I don't recall their names.

### **CAREER STARTING DAYS**

When I graduated from college, Mom and I were living in Nana and Granddad DiLeo's house on Jackson St. We were in the first floor apartment and it was a nice size for a couple. We had a kitchen and a room and a bathroom off the kitchen, a dining room, which we used as a

den/living room. We used the front room, which was the biggest, as our bedroom. There was also a small room off the living room that I set up as an office. I started applying for teaching jobs, and at that time there were few available. I finally started substituting at Newark schools, but I really didn't like that at all. No way to develop a program and really not belonging to any school or student body.

One day I got a call from one of the guys that were in my graduating class at Montclair. He was teaching at East Orange and they needed someone as a permanent part time person to teach at a couple of elementary schools. I jumped at the chance and about half way through the year it became a full time job. I stayed in East Orange for 12 years.

We lived at Jackson St. for almost three years, but we wanted our own house. Especially after Johnny was born, we wanted to have a home. At that time the Veterans Administration was supporting veterans with home loans with little or no down payment. Aunt Liv and Uncle Joe Andl had looked at a house in Sayreville, it was a split level with 8 rooms and 2 and a half baths and only cost \$13,900!! Of course that was still a lot of money in those days, but we felt we could afford it if I could get a little more income. I started a smaller band, a quintet, to play in nightclubs if we could get booked during the winter.





*This was the quintet. We called it "Johnny Anello & The Teachers" Cleto Augusto was the Drummer, Paul Irvin on Bass, Mike Traettino on Trumpet and Pete Rosamilia on Piano. As of this writing only Cleto and I are survivors of this group.*

We still had the summer big band gig at Mt. Freedom. We were booked into a club in Newark called the Silhouette as a quintet. It was a very popular place and we stayed there for a couple of years. For a time we shared the stage with a group called the "Four Lovers" featuring Frankie Valli. They recorded a song called "Sherry" and became very famous. They changed their name to the "Four Seasons".

We bought the house in Sayreville, as did Aunt Liv and Uncle Joe. In fact Aunt Liv, at the time of this writing still lives in that house, which is now 48 years later! We lived one street apart, we were on Frederick Place and Aunt Liv and Uncle Joe on Haven Terrace. As I said we bought those houses for \$13,900 and Aunt Liv could sell her house now for about \$175,000 or more!

Here is a picture of the house we lived in at 29 Frederick Pl.



The house looks a bit different, because the siding is new. But basically nothing much has changed. We stayed there for about 16 months, during which time Teri was born. I was driving into East Orange every day, and then to the Silhouette every Friday, Saturday and Sunday night. I also took a job teaching at a music store in Irvington, working there on Tuesday and Thursday evenings after I finished at East Orange and all day Saturdays before going to the Silhouette. It got to be very difficult and many times I would have to pull into the rest stop on the Garden State Parkway for a time to avoid falling asleep on the road.

Mom and I had been looking around and heard about a town called Pine Brook. It was *very* rural, and was just being developed and only about 12 miles from East Orange. We looked at the lots there and all of the lots were

a half acre or larger. We went back a number of times, and finally put a deposit on a lot on what was to become Konner Ave. There were no street numbers at that time. We put the Sayreville house up for sale and sold it, but we weren't ready to build yet, so we moved into the top floor of Nana and Granddad Anello's house in Newark. By this time they had purchased a two family house, and the third floor was really an attic that was converted into basically two small bedrooms. Granddad had a small bathroom installed there, and it was very tight and not at all comfortable, but we knew we had to do it in order to build our home in Pine Brook. We used to have our meals with Nana and Granddad. We thought we would only need to stay there for 6 or 8 months, but actually stayed for 18 months until the Pine Brook house was built. We took out a construction loan and started to get the house built. TALK ABOUT A CHALLENGE!!

We chose a "pre-cut" ranch style house. The idea of pre-cut was that all the lumber was especially cut so that you didn't have to cut pieces on the site. It was supposed to be a very efficient and cost effective way to build the house. As it turned out it was a very difficult and challenging project. Starting with the foundation we had difficulties. I hired a mason who lived near East Orange to build the foundation. He was recommended by someone at school, and was good, but didn't have transportation all the time. So I would have to pick him up in the morning, drive him out to the site (12 miles from East Orange) drop him off and then drive back to school. I would drive back to the site after school, help out and then drive him home again. It was a lot of work!

We had problems right from the start. We wanted to get started as soon as possible, but didn't get the lot paid for until December. We decided to get the foundation dug, and by the time we were ready it was almost Christmas. The foundation was dug, and a couple of days later we had a major snowstorm, which kept the foundation under ice and snow for the next two months. And that was just the beginning of our problems! It took us a lot longer than we planned, and we had to re-finance our loan because we needed extra money. We originally borrowed \$12,500 and then took an addition \$2000. But we finally got the house built, and all in all we figured it cost us about \$17,000 to build. Not bad for a 7 room ranch style house. It wasn't real big, about 1300 square feet, but it was a palace to us! I understand that today it would probably sell for over \$200,000! Just before we were ready to move in Renee was born. She was a premature baby, so we weren't able to take her home from the hospital for about three weeks. In that time we were planning to move into the house, and finally did, so that when Renee came home from the hospital she went right into her room in the new house.

Here is a picture of the Pine Brook House. The picture is in bad condition but will give you some perspective of how the house looked. We added the garage later, and made the house look much larger. It was a labor of love, and we lived there from 1958 until about 1965, when we moved to Union, New Jersey.



We moved to Union New Jersey, because I had changed my teaching job and took a position in Warren Township, which was a 45-minute drive each way from Pine Brook. Mom and I started looking around and saw this house in Union, which looked like an old English style home, solid brick with wonderful woodwork inside, and decided to try to purchase that house. That created another problem for us, because we borrowed money to put down on the Union house, but had not sold our Pine Brook home yet, so Nana and Granddad Anello moved into the Union house, since they were between homes themselves, and that enabled us to keep both houses, since they were

paying the mortgage as rent until we were able to sell and move. We finally sold and were able to move into the Union home.

Here is a picture of the Union house, not very good, since I had to take it when the sun was in the wrong direction. But Johnny, Teri and Renee remember the house and can tell your children about it.



Corner of Midland Blvd and Euclid in Union N.J.

The teaching job at Warren Township was a ball! When I started in 1964 we had 90 students from 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade studying music. The total student population was 1500. When I left there in 1968 for our move to California, there were over 400 students studying music and the school population had only increased by 75 students over that time! It was a tremendous experience and I felt great at the success it became. I had wonderful support from the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Tomaso, who became a good friend. Irv Fenner who had told me of the job, became a good friend as well, and was teaching in the neighboring town. We did some neat things together

and had a concert of combined bands that totaled 500 students. Quite an undertaking! We also took our bands to the New York World's Fair in 1964.

During all this time I was still working with my band. We had moved from the Silhouette to a club in Belleville called the "Den". It was a mob hangout and a lot of very shady characters hung out there. But they liked us and we got along just fine. An agent from New York had heard about us and came to see us at the Den. His name was Syd Sayre and was a very nice man. He loved the band and wanted us to play at a hotel in the Catskills. We didn't know much about the Catskills, but it sounded like a great opportunity and we wanted to try it. We were booked into the Raleigh Hotel in the Catskills, and it was a very nice place. One of the owners, George Gilbert, was one of the producers of "Mr. Wonderful" on Broadway featuring Sammy Davis Jr. The experiences we had there and then later at the Pines Hotel were fantastic as well as educational. We also played in places like Brown's Hotel where Jerry Lewis and Dean Martin got their start, and the Neville Hotel and the Concord Hotel. We were the show band, and backed the singers, dancers and comedians for the show each weekend. Typically the bands in the Catskills were problems for the acts, because many of the bands couldn't read very well. We soon became known among the performers traveling up there as the band to back them, because we could read well, and they didn't have any "train wrecks" with their acts. Generally the shows consisted of a dance team to open, then either a singer and a comedian headliner, or a comic and a singer headliner. We played for their shows, and then a dance set, alternating with a Latin band. Then we would go into the lounge and play until 2:00 A.M.

Backing these acts was a great experience for all of us and particularly for me, because I learned a great deal about singing by watching how the singers performed. We also began to do our own little shows, and hired a choreographer from New York to stage some of our songs. We had to go into New York to rehearse, because he didn't want to come to New Jersey. Somehow we were able to use one of the studios at WOR radio for our rehearsals. We did so well that the Pines Hotel let us become the opening act, which was unusual to say the least. Some of the acts we backed during those days included Frankie Avalon, Fabian, Bobby Rydell, Rip Taylor, Totie Fields (who wanted us to travel with her as her band, and unfortunately died too soon) Morie Amsterdam, Jackie Mason, Carol Lawrence and many others that I've forgotten. Probably most of these names don't mean too much to you, but they were all very popular and most became very big in the entertainment industry, either in movies, TV or records. We played in the Catskills from about 1960 to 1964, going up on weekends in the winter. We didn't do the summers because we were booked into a club in New Rochelle New York. It was called the Greentree Surf and Tennis Club and was an upscale summer resort. The band stayed there for about 6 summers and until we left for California.

Syd Sayre got us a job during the winter at a club in Brooklyn, and believe it or not the name was also the "Silhouette". But this club was much different from all the other clubs we worked in. It was truly a mob club! Every Saturday night a man would come in with his entourage, and a long table was set up in front of the bandstand. We had name singers there, and backed people like Jimmy Rushing (who sang with Count Basie for years), Carmen



McRae, Johnny Ray, Lou Monte and many others. Anyway, the man who was given the table was a Don of one of the New York families. In fact he was among the mafia people arrested in the raid in the Appalachians when there was a meeting of the heads of the various mobs around the country and the New York and New Jersey State police raided the meeting. But they treated us well at the club, they loved the band, and we always received a large tip from him every time he came into the club.

Back home in Union I was still teaching at Warren Township, and decided to go for my Master's degree at Trenton State College. It was about a 50-mile drive to the school, but Irv Fenner and I decided to go together and shared the driving. I concentrated on a conducting program and my final project was a concert of my band in Warren Township. Turned out fine and I finally got my Masters degree. I started doing some part time teaching at the college in Union, at that time called Union State College, now called Kean University. I was teaching a course on Music Appreciation and had a wonderful time. I liked college teaching and thought that I would go for a doctorate, and eventually try for a college position. I started courses at Rutgers University, but unfortunately the only doctorate they offered there was in Musicology, and I had absolutely no interest in that type of program.

I stayed at Rutgers taking music courses, and had about 20 units. While there, I worked with the Rutgers marching band director as his assistant, and attended a number of football games with the band. I had investigated the doctoral program at Temple University in Philadelphia, and was seriously considering enrolling in their program, since they had an instrumental emphasis when we decided to move to California.

At home, we were always interested in the beach and wanted to look into getting a beach house somewhere on the Jersey shore. We heard about a house in South Belmar and went to look at it. It was a cute house, with a front porch and a living room two bedrooms, a dining room and a very small kitchen. It had a garage in the back and the lot was very deep, but not too wide. I believe the measurements were 40 ft wide and about 178 ft deep. Here is a picture of that house now. As you can see the owners closed in the porch.



We had many fun times there, and because the house had heat, we sometimes went down for a weekend in the winter also. That house cost \$9000 when we bought it. We sold it after we moved to California for \$11,500. No telling what it is worth now!

I also started teaching a course in Music Appreciation at Monmouth College, now Monmouth University, in Long Branch. After our trip to California to visit my brother Uncle Ben and Aunt Monica, Mom and I started talking about the possibility of moving to California. We were struck by the beauty and the wonderful weather. I went back to California during the Easter break with Uncle Sonny and Tony Merlo to see if there were any teaching jobs available. Uncle Sonny and Tony had seen our pictures and and video and heard us telling of how much we liked California and were thinking of moving. They decided to come out and look too, and they also decided to move. We thought it would be a great opportunity and at the time the California school system was great and the tuition at the State Colleges was minimal, if at all, which would make it easy for you all to get a good education without the cost that would be incurred back in New Jersey.

When I got back to New Jersey from the trip I received a phone call from both Placentia and Rowland Heights offering me a job. Mom and I talked about it and I remember her saying, “Take the Placentia job, I like the name of that town”

So I accepted that job and we decided to move. A couple of days later I received a call from the Dean of Fine Arts at Monmouth College offering me the position of Assistant Professor of Music at Monmouth!! Talk about feast or famine! We had decided to move, so I thanked him for the offer, explained about our plans and we proceeded to move to California.

We moved into an apartment complex in Yorba Linda, but after a few short weeks we decided that the environment was not what we wanted for you all.

We had looked at houses in Placentia during our visit to Uncle Ben's and we went back there. Mom looked at the house on Columbia Circle and said, "This is it, this is what I want". I didn't think we could afford it, so we made an offer on it. It was the original model for the tract, and the asking price was \$38,500. We offered \$32,500, fully expecting to be turned down. Surprisingly the builder accepted the offer if we would take the house with the coloring already established, which was avocado, both fixtures and carpeting. We agreed and that was that!

I think that by this time you were all old enough to remember the things that happened from then on. I don't think I need to fill you in on much more, as far as history goes. A lot has happened here in California. Consider that you all have spent more time in California than in New Jersey. Mom and I were 41 years old when we moved out here, so we had almost as much time out here as we did in New Jersey. All your children, my grandchildren, are native Californians!

As I said in the beginning I really didn't know how this would turn out. But I hope there are things here that you didn't know and find interesting. As for my grandchildren, it may give them some idea of their grandfather and grandparents, and a sense of how we got "From There to Here."

We were never rich by most standards, but we were, for the most part, comfortable. I don't remember working only one job, except for the time with Disney when it took hours and hours, leaving no time for extra work. But we were blessed with you all, my reasonably good health, and an incredibly wonderful woman in Mom.

Although her health was never as good as we wished, she did things that many other women never achieved even with their good health. She was an exceptional woman, an incomparable wife to me, and mother and grandmother to you all. So much of what we all do and think is a direct result of her influence on all of us. She was a tiny lady but a giant spirit.

I love you all, very much, as did your Mom. I know we all miss her terribly, but carry her good thoughts and her good influences with us forever.

God Bless you all.

Dad, Granddaddy, Pupie

November 20, 2001

FROM THERE TO HERE  
MY RECOLLECTIONS

DAD  
GRANDDAD  
PUPPIE

DR. JOHN ANELLO  
CHRISTMAS 2001

